

## PROJECT SUMMARY

**County: El Dorado, Amador**

**Applicant: California Association of Resources Conservation Districts**

**Project Title: Cosumnes Watershed Home Yard Audits**

### PROJECT GOAL

To provide information, technical assistance, and community building around water use efficiency sufficient enough to significantly change water use patterns in the watershed by conducting home yard audits assessing fire safety, water use efficiency, storm water pollution, and habitat value.

### PROJECT SCOPE

The Cosumnes River is a river of statewide significance. As the last undammed river on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and as a contributor to the bay-delta ecosystem, it is important that this river be protected and restored. This project will address the number one restoration issue of the Cosumnes River as identified by the State Water Resources Quality Control Board and the Cosumnes River Watershed Management Plan (available at [www.cosumneswatershed.org](http://www.cosumneswatershed.org)): reduced fall and summer flows. In order to increase fall and summer flows in the river, a systemic water use efficiency program will be instituted throughout the watershed based on the publicly vetted Cosumnes River Watershed Management Plan. A strategy of voluntary conservation was selected to accomplish the goal of greater water use efficiency through technical assistance, education and supplying equipment. This strategy was selected because the watershed is largely undeveloped, primarily rural residential, mostly supplied by wells, and almost exclusively privately owned (with the exception of the El Dorado National Forest).

The audit program is a crucial piece of the larger effort. The Sierra Nevada region of the watershed provides a majority of fall and summer surface flow. Winter rains fill the rock fissure aquifers in the upper watershed. Overflow travels through subsurface flow to the river arriving during the summer and fall. As the upper watershed has developed, these flows have been dramatically reduced. While the river once flowed all year, it now dries up entirely in dry years, and dries in reaches almost every year. By providing landowners the tools, information, and education they need to reduce their use of water, a greater surface flow can be obtained. According to the American Water Association, converting a 2500 sq foot lawn to native landscaping saves 372 gallons of water per day during the growing season. Assuming the growing season is 4 months, each property will use 44,640 less gallons of water. Assessing 40 properties will result in a savings of 1.8 million gallons of water per year. This water is crucial to the existence and restoration of the Cosumnes River. In addition, a catastrophic wildfire could severely affect the health of the river for decades.

Building on a successful pilot project in which the Nashville-Sandridge fire safe council in partnership with the Sierra Forest Legacy assessed 6 homes, at least 40 yard audits will be conducted in El Dorado and Amador Counties that will assess properties for water use efficiency, habitat value, storm water pollution, and fire risk. Recommendations will be made to property owners that will include simple, cost effective ways to reduce the negative factors on their properties including native and fire resistant plants, rain gardens, water harvesting equipment, defensible space requirements, and storm water pollution Best Management Practices. Documentation of property condition and water use will be collected before and after the audit to provide demonstrate changes made as a direct result of the program.

However, simply assessing a few properties will not have the wide reaching impact necessary to change the relationship of the watershed community to its water use. The program will encourage broad community adoption by extending the scope deep into the communities through existing community networks and providing widespread educational opportunities. A peer leader program based on the "Livestock and Land" model will be implemented to influence neighbors and friends, show a visible presence in neighborhoods, and transfer valuable knowledge to the leaders of the community. Peer leaders will be used to educate the broader community both formally and informally. Public events presented by experts and a tour of installation sites will be held to educate the general community about the underlying concepts, watershed health, and simple techniques that can be employed to reduce impact on the environment. Informational fliers will be created to advertise for the program and to reach more

watershed members.

A report will be synthesized at the conclusion of the program that will contain data on actual water savings, before and after photos, lessons learned, and advice for implementing similar programs in other regions. The report will be distributed to local elected officials, regional watershed coordinators, local agencies, state and federal agency representatives, and throughout the state through the CARCD network and annual statewide conference.

At the conclusion of the program an assessment will be made as to the need, interest, financial opportunities, and alterations needed to extend the program. Every effort will be made to find funding and support to continue the program beyond the life of the SNC grant.

## LETTERS OF SUPPORT

El Dorado Fire Safe Council

## SNC PROJECT DELIVERABLES AND SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Develop evaluation materials (pre and post surveys, evaluation templates, outreach and educational materials)	4/2009- 6/2009
Develop Program (work with other entities to utilize resources efficiently, developed a targeted property list, develop and distribute informational fliers, prioritize potential participants, establish a schedule for audits)	5/2009- 8/2009
Establish a peer leader program (recruit participants from the pilot project, recruit other community leaders, train peer leaders, create signs to be placed on peer leaders properties)	5/2009- 8/2009
Institute Program (hold a kick-off event, conduct evaluations, follow-up with landowners 1 and 3 months after initial evaluation)	9/2009- 1/2010
6 Month Report	10/2009
Demonstrate the Accomplishments (closing event, tour of properties)	2/2010
Summarize the Program (create a report and distribute widely)	2/2010
6 Month Report	4/2010
Find continued support (assess the resources, need and interest in continuing the project)	4/2009- 3/2010
Final Report	9/2010

## SNC PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Staff	\$22,400
Events	\$2,100
Advertising	\$4,300
Travel	\$1,100
Training	\$300
Supplies	\$500
Tour	\$500
Administration	\$4700
<b>SNC GRANT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$35,900</b>